

Information on Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome “SARS”

What is SARS?

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) is a serious respiratory illness caused by a virus. It is a worldwide problem.

What are the symptoms and signs of SARS?

The illness usually begins with a fever of a100.4°F or higher. A person may experience fever, chills, headache and body aches too. Some people may experience breathing problems along with these other early symptoms.

After 2 to 7 days, a person with SARS may develop a dry, nonproductive cough and may have a very difficult time breathing and getting enough oxygen to their blood. This is very serious and can be life threatening.

How long does it take for symptoms of SARS to appear?

Usually it takes 2-7 days for a person to develop symptoms after being infected with the SARS virus. In some cases it may take as long as 10 days.

How is SARS spread?

SARS is primarily spread by close contact with an infected person. When a person who is ill with SARS coughs or sneezes, the virus can be spread through the air. When someone else breathes in the virus they can become infected. Touching surfaces or other items contaminated by the virus may also spread SARS. The SARS virus may also be present in the feces of an infected person. **Therefore, frequent and thorough hand washing is absolutely necessary** to prevent the spread of SARS. Research on how SARS is spread is currently being done in several countries.

Who can get SARS?

Anyone can become infected with SARS. Currently, the people most at risk for SARS are people who have direct, close contact with an infected person, such as those sharing a home with a SARS patient and health care workers providing care to persons with SARS. People who have recently traveled to countries where there is ongoing transmission of SARS are at greater risk of infection.

Is there a test for SARS?

Currently only ill people can be tested when a doctor suspects they may have SARS.

What can I do to prevent becoming infected with SARS or infecting others?

- [avoid unnecessary travel to countries where SARS is a problem](#)
- do not share eating utensils, glasses, etc.
- wash your hands thoroughly and frequently
- cover your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when you cough or sneeze

What should I do if I think one of my family members or I have SARS?

See a doctor or go to a hospital emergency room immediately! The health department does not have any physicians on staff and does not provide testing for SARS.